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MR. PRESIDENT :—" I have to inform the House that in accordance with the regulations framed by me under rule 143 of the Madras Council Rules for the holding of elections according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, I fix 3 p.m. on Friday, the 19th September 1947 as the time within which nomination of candidates for election to the House Committee should reach the Secretary.

" If the number of candidates nominated exceeds the number of vacancies, namely, six, there will be an election between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on 22nd September 1947."

X.—FOOD SITUATION IN THE PROVINCE.

THE HON. DR. T. S. S. RAJAN :—" Sir, I beg to move that—
'*the food situation in the province be taken into consideration.*'

" In doing so, Sir, I beg to submit that I have already circulated a copy of my statement [a] to all the hon. Members of this House a week in advance of this session. Therefore, I think the House will excuse me from reading the statement again in the House just now. Besides, I have also submitted a supplementary correction slip which has been sent to all the Members of the House which brings the figures to the latest date, viz., 31st August 1947."

MR. PRESIDENT :—" The question is that the food situation in the province be taken into consideration. It is now open for discussion. In this connexion, I would like all the hon. Members who wish to take part in the discussion to give me their names in advance, so that I may fix the time we may require for the entire discussion. The members have had the statement sufficiently in advance; and so, I think there will not be any difficulty in their making up their minds and giving their names to me if they want to speak thereon."

SRI K. MANATHUNAINATHA DESIGAR :—" Mr. President, it is painful to hear every year the tale of woe, regarding food position in our province during this part of the year.

" In the food economy of our province, it is not possible to expect any change within a period of five or six years. The main features of the situation are shortage of internal supply, production in an average season being smaller than consumption, and the shortage of imports from abroad. If the movement of rice from Burma or Indo-China is re-established, some change may be expected. But prospects are not bright in that direction.

" Under the above circumstances, it is to be considered, how long are these controls to continue, and how they are to be relaxed. Difficult problems are bound to arise in the process of relaxation

a Printed as Appendix III on pages 54–64.

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of the existing controls. The return to normal conditions must be gradual and regulated. Unless it is planned and prepared for in advance, the chaotic conditions of Bengal in 1942–43 may be repeated. I am of opinion that hereafter a policy of 'Laissez Faire' in the matter of food supply and distribution is impossible. It is only by rationing, you can control the entire stock of the community of the article in short supply, and distribute it evenly. It prevents hoarding and profiteering, controls prices and above all restore confidence in the people. Its chief object is the burden must in equity be shared equally by all. If rationing is to be universal, procurement also is to be universal; and so the procurement is to be done throughout the province. Thus the question of abolishing rationing in surplus districts does not arise. Also abolition after the next harvest is not understandable, for after a few months after harvest, scarcity will set in naturally. In my opinion the system should be revitalized, basing it on a more rational policy. A proper plan is to be evolved; and vigorous steps are to be taken for checking black-marketing, which is admitted in the speech of the Hon. Minister.

" Secondly I plead strongly the Government should endeavour to increase the food resources as a permanent objective of the food policy. I am glad to note this in the speech of the Hon. Minister. As an important step in the direction of this policy, the cultivator should be assured a reasonable return; and at the same time the prevailing prices of essential commodities of rural consumption, such as cloth, kerosene, etc., are to be maintained in equitable relation to the price of foodgrains.

" It seems to be the idea of the Government of India that the target price level of the foodgrains may be 240 per cent of the prices, that prevailed in 1938–39. So long as the Government of India are discharging their responsibility of conserving, augmenting and distributing the food resources of the country, it is not possible to develop provincial exclusiveness. There is the need for the centre and the province to act together as one unit, in the planning and execution of the measures necessary to solve these problems. In the food conference held in January 1947, Hon. the Food Minister to the Government of India had offered the assistance of the centre for financing and executing all schemes to raise the yield by 11½ per cent on condition that we should make our contribution also. Probably the recent bonus scheme was based on the above offer. But it came late in the crop year; and its chief purpose of inducing the cultivators to grow more food was not served, though it has helped procurement to some extent. If it is found not possible to raise the price of foodgrains, at least the Government should see to reduce the cost of cultivation in the direction of subsidizing the manure, agriculture implements, cattle food, etc.

" Only a well-planned scheme set forth at the right time, and carried out by proper agency can solve the problem really.

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"The next step in this direction is the formulation of a scheme for restricting the cultivation of non-food crops, and the bringing of new areas under cultivation. In a press conference held on 19th February 1946, Mr. Masterman, then Adviser in charge of Food, had stated that 180,000 acres have been newly brought under cultivation up to 30th September 1945. A thorough investigation is to be made to find out, how far the above extent has helped the production drive, and what remedies have to be adopted in cases, where it is found disappointing. Of course we are hearing of the formulation of various schemes under 'Grow More Food Campaign', and my only submission is, that the experiences gained regarding the schemes already carried out, should be fully utilized in the proposed schemes, rectifying all defects, and adopting all precautions.

"An attempt is to be made seriously, regarding popularization of subsidiary food, like fish.

"Lastly, I wish to state a propaganda is to be carried on even from now, to advance the cultivation of short-term paddy in the deltaic districts, to save the situation in the later half of 1948. I cannot help mentioning that if only the Government had listened to my suggestions to advance 'Kuruvai' cultivation in the Cauveri delta by supplying water from Mettur earlier, I am sure at least an additional quantity of twenty-thousand tons of new paddy would have been available by this time besides the quantity procured now from that delta."

* Sri N. RANGA REDDI :—"Mr. President, Sir, this House 5 p.m. is really grateful to the Hon. the Minister for Food for having given the opportunity to express its opinion on this question. I also congratulate the Hon. Minister for having supplied us with a copy of the speech in advance. We have had the pleasure and the benefit of reading the speech and digesting all the relevant facts. When I read through the speech I found that there was a grave note struck in the statement and I felt that I should invite the attention of the House to the relevant passage in that speech. The policy has been enunciated in paragraph 19 of the speech. It runs as follows : 'The truth is that people are getting tired and impatient of the never-ending demands on behalf of the Government. It seems therefore sufficient if the Government limit their responsibilities to areas which need protection, such as towns, industries, deficit parts of districts. It has therefore been suggested that rural rationing may be discontinued except in Malabar and statutory rationing be given up in towns in surplus districts as the crops of the next year are harvested. After all the Government cannot undertake indefinitely the direct feeding of the people and steps should be taken some day, the sooner the better, to restore, as far as may be, the normal channels of distribution.' I take it, Sir, that this statement is not the statement of policy by the Government. I suppose it is the suggestion which has been made by certain eminent people that rural rationing as also statutory rationing may be discontinued. But, if it were the intention of the

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Government and if they want to give up this rationing altogether at a later stage, then I submit it will not be easy for them to provide the poor people of this Province foodgrains at reasonable rates. I take it, Sir, that rationing has been there because the Government accepted the responsibility for feeding the starving millions of this Province at reasonable rates and so that policy ought to be continued in future also. But if the Government for some reason or other think that that policy ought to be discontinued, I think it is too late in the day to give up this policy of providing food at reasonable cost to all the peoples of this Province.

" Sir, the next point I would like to submit is the question of controls. Various measures have been suggested. Very eminent people have also suggested that controls ought to be abolished. I want to say only one thing about controls. If all those facts given by the Hon. Minister in his statement are correct, then you can never give up controls. When once you accept the responsibility of providing food at reasonable prices, you cannot give up controls. The speech of the Hon. Minister itself shows that there is a shortage of rice and there is shortage in production. If there is a shortage in production and if the Government accept the responsibility of feeding the people at reasonable cost, then how can the control be removed? Control is necessary and should be maintained and should be worked in a more perfect manner than they are doing at present. The whole difficulty arises because the controls are not satisfactorily working and the people are not satisfied.

" Sir, there is another trouble and that is Government have introduced what is called statutory rationing in municipal areas and what is called informal rationing in rural areas. What happens is the Government do not accept responsibility, so far as rural areas are concerned, of providing food to the villagers at a reasonable cost. They merely say, we provide the villagers with foodgrains so long as we can; then they have to look to themselves. So far as municipal areas are concerned where statutory rationing is in force, the Government accept that it is their statutory duty to provide food at reasonable prices in those areas. They collect the grains from the villages and distribute them in the municipal areas. I know there are some villages under rural rationing which are not able to get any foodgrains, but so far as municipal areas are concerned, they have been supplied regularly with foodgrains and there has been no case of any municipal area not getting its full supply of these foodgrains. What happens? There is an influx of population from the rural areas to the municipal areas where statutory rationing has been introduced. Statistics will show that. I do not know whether the figures are correct but there has been a great influx of population from villages to towns. If you take the census of 1940 and also take the census as enumerated under the food rationing scheme in 1946, you will find that there is a large increase in population in municipal areas. Obviously, it was due to the fact that people from villages have gone to towns because they are assured of a regular supply of foodgrains in towns.

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The second reason is that where there is no rationing and where there is scarcity of foodgrains, people in the villages find it extremely difficult to get their supply of foodgrains. The scarcity was felt more in the villages because whatever foodgrains were available in the villages were being procured by the Revenue subordinates and distributed in the taluks. They simply starve the people in the villages and procure whatever is available in the villages and distribute them in towns in order to show to their superiors their efficiency in procuring and also to create the impression that there is no scarcity in the villages. Even some eminent people have suggested that rural rationing may be abolished and statutory rationing in municipal towns may also be discontinued. If rationing is abolished in villages then, whatever quantity of foodgrains that will be procured will not be available to the people in villages. What is the Government going to do? Is it assumed that whatever grain is available in certain villages will be kept in some villages without being transported to other villages? I do not think so. I am certain that if Government allowed the people in the villages to sell their grains freely, then not one single grain or even seed will be left in the village because it will all be sold at the highest price to the highest bidder. Of course, people might say that there is price control, but that will be only on paper. When once you give up rural rationing, there is no control at all. If you allow free transport of grain from one district to another district, then the districts which produce more grain will not be allowed the use of the extra quantity in their own district. The surplus will be transported to all other places. Therefore, I submit that if you want to introduce rationing, let it be thorough rationing; if you want to introduce control, let it be thorough control. Do not introduce partial control; it is very unsatisfactory. When the Government assume the responsibility for providing the people with food, let them assume that responsibility for all the people in the Province and let them not have a divided responsibility.

"Sir, the next point I would like to submit is this. Much has been said about the hardship and the persecution which have been caused by the officials in procuring foodgrains. Much also has been said by people who are interested in getting all the foodgrains for themselves from the ryots for the purpose of black-marketing. These people may say that the ryots are hoarders and that they are doing an anti-social act and so on. But I would say only this thing. So far as Government officials are concerned—I know very often they give incorrect figures and in a matter like this, I do not think we can trust the Government servant at all—they simply throw away their responsibility and give incorrect figures of the yield of the quantity produced. That is one side of the picture. The other side is that the prices have gone up very high and it is rather difficult to induce the ryot to part with his grain for the controlled price. Hon. Members of this House might remember that the prices when once controlled or fixed, do not always remain stationary. Prices may be fixed so far as Government are concerned but they are going to vary. It is only a political price and

not an economic price. You cannot fix the price of foodgrains without taking into account the prices of other articles because the prices of other articles are bound to act and react on the prices of foodgrains. If you fix the price of paddy at Rs. 100 for 500 measures, it cannot always remain at Rs. 100. When the prices of other articles are changing and the ryots have to pay more for all those articles, the prices of foodgrains alone cannot remain fixed. As a matter of fact, in the black-market, paddy is being sold at two and a half times the price that is fixed by the Government. When such is the case, how can you expect the ryot to part with his grain easily? It is no doubt true that he is hoarding and doing black-marketing and thus he is doing all these anti-social acts. But, if you cannot give him a fair price which will enable him to purchase all other essential articles, then there is no use in using coercion. I submit that even a conqueror when he occupies a territory of another State, he would not use coercive measures so far as procurement is concerned. I recently read a book on Germany and it was stated therein that when the invading German armies occupied another territory, so far as procurement 5-15 p.m. of foodgrains was concerned, the Germans fixed the prices of foodgrains to be procured at a very fair rate and the ordinary course of business was not disturbed. In fact, they were allowing a much higher rate than what was prevailing in their own country. Therefore, what I have to submit is that coercion does not pay. Of course, I am not saying that Government has used coercion or saying anything in defence of coercion, but what I mean to say is, though coercion is not the policy of the Government, it would not pay if used and it will never pay so far as the peasant is concerned. There is also another reason why the peasant should not be allowed to part with his foodgrains at such a low cost as that prescribed by the Government. If you take something from a person who receives or has received certain benefits in the past either from this Government or the previous Government I can understand the justification for it, but so far as the peasant is concerned, he has been doomed to penury and misery for the last 150 or 200 years and he has not received one single benefit all these years though he is the first person whose labour and produce is being requisitioned by the Government. When I say this, I should not be understood as saying that the Government should not impose controls or that Government should not procure foodgrains at reasonable rates. It is of course the Government's duty to save the people of the Province. Let Government do whatever they want to do in this connection but they should also impose controls on various other articles which are not easily available for the peasant. No doubt, the controls have been imposed for the benefit of the peasant but the Government should make available the controlled articles to the peasant such as agricultural implements and other such essential articles required by him, but they have not been made available to him. What I wish to submit is. controls have been imposed but those controls have not been useful to the peasants.

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" There is another point to be considered in this connexion. You have controlled the price of foodgrains after they have been harvested as it were, but you have not controlled the wages of the labourer. So, till the wages of the agricultural labourer also are controlled, it is unfair to control the price of foodgrains. What happens is this. You have taken the pre-war averages for 3 or 4 years and struck an average and in fixing the prices of foodgrains you say, this is the fair price. I submit that that is not the right way of doing things. Official statistics are not correct and let me say that the ryots have suffered very much with regard to foodgrains. There is also another fact in regard to this question to be considered. When you fix the price of foodgrains you are only taking into account the actual cost of production and giving the cultivator only the quantity necessary for his sustenance for that year, for his seed and for other working expenses, but what is to be his future, you have not said anything. After all you want to procure foodgrains from the peasant and why don't you tell him even at the beginning that ' your welfare shall be our main concern in future and we are going to do this and that for you.' If you tell him this, procurement will be easy and it will be successful. I do not find any such declaration of the policy of the Government with regard to the future of the peasant. Here I would like to say one more thing. You must make it easy for the peasant to part with his grains. You must see that a strong public opinion is to be created and what is the public opinion with regard to village committees? No doubt all the opinions point to the same direction and that is the village committees in very many places have been a source of trouble and faction, though they have been praised as very good agents in the matter of procuring foodgrains. But in fact they do not appear to be such good agents in the matter of procurement. In some places they no doubt yield power but they also give enough trouble, because we are associating non-officials with the administration of the food policy. In very many places, the complaint is there is a lot of discrimination, partiality and various other things. No doubt, all the complaints that are levelled against the constitution of the village committees and against the management of these committees are not justifiable. You will find that whenever there is a shortage there is bound to be some difficulty in distribution and when one gets his requirements and another does not get, of course, every man who is equally entitled to get his requirements, he will naturally complain against the food committee and say that it has not been functioning properly at all. There are no doubt some cases like that and on the whole the village committees have not been very useful to the people and in certain places they have aggravated animosities that were lying dormant in most villages. I do not know whether the Government have considered this aspect of the question seriously. I find from the newspaper reports that Government are contemplating the abolition of district boards and that they want to give every power to village panchayats. I have been told by very many of my friends, sympathizers and supporters that you should postpone the

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date of transferring power to the village panchayats and in this connexion one of the suggestions made is that village committees should be abolished and those powers should be entrusted to taluk committees. I welcome this suggestion because these village committees have not got much power in their hands though they have got power to do a lot of mischief.

"The next thing I want to mention is in regard to the fixation of prices and I think in this matter we are moving in a vicious circle. It is true that fixing prices at a very high level would induce the ryot to part with the foodgrains that he has hoarded, but it will not increase production. Why I say so is this. You will see the very same lands which produce the foodgrains produce also other commercial crops. If, therefore, Government are going to commandeer foodgrains at particular rates, the ryot will not be tempted to sow foodgrains in those areas but he will only grow other commercial crops which will fetch him a greater price and give him greater benefit. One of the suggestions made in this connexion is to restrict the area under cultivation of commercial crops and extending the area under foodgrains. I ask, is it possible to do that? To compel the ryot to sow only foodgrains over a particular area will not be a feasible proposition. Of course, that is my opinion. You can never compel an agriculturist in this matter and if you do so, the land will only remain fallow and the remedy will be worse than the disease. You will see that even now the acreage under foodgrains is much less and it will become much less next year, because the ryot knows that Government are going to commandeer foodgrains and therefore he would try to divert his land for sowing commercial crops because commercial crops will yield much better price to the ryot. Therefore, I submit there is no point in compelling the ryot to sow only foodgrains. There is another point . . ."

MR. PRESIDENT :—"May I inform the hon. Member that it is proposed to adjourn the House at 5-30."

SRI N. RANGA REDDI :—"Sir, I will finish in five minutes. In regard to controls, unless you are going to extend control to all other essential articles, it will not be an efficient proposition. All the crops grow on the very same land, with the very same labour, and with the very same manure and so on. If you lower the price of one article and increase the price in the other, they will not grow the cheaper crop. After all why should he be actuated by the motive to support all the people in the province and why should you expect him to work for some other people in the province. So, this kind of haphazard or this kind of improvised method of getting more grains will not solve the problem. You should first of all know the figures, that is, the number of people that have to be fed and the number of tons of grain that are required for the purpose and then you will have to see how this grain is going to be produced. You should see how many acres of land are required to grow foodgrains and you should also see that the ryot does not grumble to grow grains in those areas. You should also see that his future

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requirements are provided and that the prices of all the articles are controlled. As a matter of fact, I know that even with regard to motor cars after the control has been lifted, there have been complaints. While there was control of motor cars, people were saying, oh! this business is mismanaged and there is a lot of partiality and people who ought to get cars are not getting cars. Now the complaint is that these cars are sold at a much higher price and all people are not getting cars. Government have imposed a control to the extent of 10 or 20 per cent and people have told me, why not have complete control of cars because the business is not properly administered. Human nature is such that so long as there are restrictions, they say, we don't want controls, and the moment the controls are removed, we know all people suffer. The poor man who gets the rationed articles also complains of controls. What he thinks is, if this control is not there, perhaps he may get more articles. Probably it is wrong to describe that person as a poor man because he probably has more money than what many people think. In this connexion I am reminded of an article I read in an English newspaper in which it was stated that a mason went in a motor car to build a house for a particular person. When he went there he said, 'I want the garage.' The owner said, 'I did not expect you to come without a driver', meaning thereby that those people were getting such incomes that they could provide their own drivers for their cars which could be looked after without a garage. Of course incomes have gone high in those places. In the same manner here also the ordinary labourer's income has also gone high and people have got to purchase foodgrains at much higher prices. What I say is, when you want to impose controls, impose thorough controls and do not have halfhearted measures which will not at all satisfy the purpose. Therefore, I submit, if at all you want to have controls, you had better think beforehand the plans for planned economy and impose necessary controls but do not improvise half-hearted or haphazard measures. You will have also to see that the ryot's future is assured and unless this is done, he will not be able to supply your requirements and there is also not much justification in taking his grain at a very low price as it is the case at present and mere high prices will not at all increase production. You will have to devise other measures for increasing production. This can be done only by providing the ryot his requirements such as engines, agricultural implements, seeds, manure, etc., at reasonable prices. You may also improve hospitals and schools in the villages, so that public opinion in rural areas might also be effective. Perhaps by these means you can compel landlords to part with their produce. Otherwise it is impossible."

MR. PRESIDENT :—"To-morrow is a non-official day and the day after to-morrow is a holiday. The food debate can go on only on the 19th. I suppose it is agreeable to all hon. Members. (After a pause.) The food debate will be resumed at 11 a.m. on the 19th September 1947.

"The House now stands adjourned to 3 p.m. to-morrow."